

Remarks

Claims 20-27 are pending. Claims 21-26 have been withdrawn from consideration. Claims 20 and 27 have been rejected as anticipated by Tweed et al (U.S. 5,591,072).

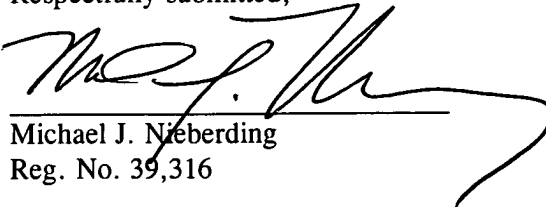
Claim 20 is patentable over the cited art based upon the fact that it expressly requires a sharpener assembly:

having a sharpening stone, a deburring stone, a retractable shield and a sharpening actuator, wherein the sharpening stone, the retractable shield and the sharpening actuator are each biased into normal positions such that the retractable shield is normally positioned so as to substantially shield the sharpening stone from slicing debris during food product slicing operations, **wherein the sharpening stone, the retractable shield and the sharpening actuator are arranged such that movement of the sharpening actuator to initiate sharpening causes both (i) the retractable shield to move out of its normal position into a retracted position and (ii) the sharpening stone to move out of its normal position into sharpening contact with the blade, including moving linearly downwardly toward the blade.**

Applicants disagree with the Examiner's position that sharpening stone of Tweed et al. since the blade is disposed at an angle relative to vertical. In such a case, the sharpening stone could in fact move upward in order to engage the blade rather than downward. Claim 27 is patentable over Tweed et al. for at least the same reason. Accordingly, claims 20 and 27 should be allowed.

Please contact the undersigned attorney with any questions regarding this response.

Respectfully submitted,



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